



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

GREG ABBOTT

January 30, 2015

The Honorable Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

This country owes much to its veterans. Right now, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is falling far short of its obligation to support our nation's heroes. Nowhere is that more apparent than in the Texas Rio Grande Valley. That is why I write now to ask that you renew your efforts to create an inpatient facility and urgent care center to meet the critical medical needs of veterans in the Rio Grande Valley.

According to the VA, the Rio Grande Valley is home to tens of thousands of veterans. And, yet, veterans in the Valley needing critical inpatient care must travel hundreds of miles to the closest VA inpatient facility dedicated to serving veterans. The Rio Grande Valley also lacks a VA facility dedicated to the urgent care of veterans. New, expanded facilities providing inpatient and urgent care are vital to meeting the health care needs of our veterans in the Valley.

Support for additional health care facilities for veterans in the Valley is not a partisan issue. The call for Washington to establish a full service VA hospital in the Valley echoes across the political aisle. Earlier this year, two Democratic congressmen from the Rio Grande Valley called on Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert McDonald to visit the Valley to see firsthand the desperate need for additional VA health care facilities.

Moreover, in 2008, you also recognized the need for such health facilities when, as a senator, you cosponsored a bill filed by Senator John Cornyn (R-Texas) that would have provided a full-scale hospital in the Rio Grande Valley. That same year, as a presidential hopeful campaigning in the Valley, you were clear: "We need a VA hospital right here in the Valley. People don't need to be driving 200 miles."

The need for additional capacity is more acute now than in 2008 when you called upon the VA to establish additional facilities in the Valley. Since then, the Valley has continued to grow. That's why Texas is moving forward with plans to open a new medical school and a state-of-the-art hospital at the University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley. The co-location of a VA hospital in the Valley would be a force multiplier, ensuring that veterans in the Valley also have access to first-

rate health care. The VA should take steps now to leverage the investments that Texas is already making.

Our veterans' service to this country may end when they leave the battlefield, but this country's service to our veterans cannot end there. It is time that the VA provide the necessary health facilities to serve the veterans in the Rio Grande Valley.

Sincerely,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Greg Abbott". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Greg" being more prominent and the last name "Abbott" following in a similar style.

Greg Abbott
Governor of Texas